

M - 164,621

E - 189,871

S - 323,624

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Thieu foes question 'death list' authenticity

By a Sun Staff Correspondent

Saigon—South Vietnamese officials are circulating purported Viet Cong assassination and execution lists among opposition and independent political leaders in an effort to scare up more support for President Nguyen Van Thieu.

The leaders are being told that they will be killed by the Viet Cong if the Communists come to power, and the lists are cited as evidence.

But many of the local leaders, even after finding their names on one of the 30 or so purported "blood debt" lists, say they believe the documents were not captured from the Viet Cong, but rather were faked by the Thieu government with American help.

"The implication of these lists is that, like it or not, we are stuck with the Thieu government if we want to live, so we should support it and fight for it," said a Buddhist monk from Qui Nhon, a port city on the central coast.

"But not even the most naive would believe these lists are real. I am sure the Viet Cong do have lists maybe even extensive lists, but not so loosely protected that the government can capture 30 or 40 of them, and all conveniently with the names of people the government wants to blackmail into supporting it."

This lists came to light when some were leaked to pro-government newspapers in Saigon and others were shown to members of the National Assembly in an attempt to obtain their

support for a proposed law to permit President Thieu to rule by decree for six months.

"They showed me a list with my name at the very top," said an independent member of the South Vietnamese Senate. "But the list was plainly a Thieu concoction . . . The Communists may want to kill me, but I am hardly No. 1."

A number of the community leaders in the Mekong Delta, south of Saigon, who have been shown the lists say they not only doubt they are real but assert that the Viet Cong has changed its policy on executing opponents to collect the so-called "blood debts."

They cite the January 25 order to Communist troops to welcome defectors from the government's ranks and to treat leniently those who remain with the government but sympathize with the revolution.

Absence of executions

They also cite the absence of mass executions in areas captured by the Communists since the offensive began March 30. Some executions have been reported from Loc Ninh, north of An Loc, and in Quang Tri province, but they have been few in number.

"So many people have cooperated with the government or worked for the Americans now," said one Da Nang politician, "that the Communists could not possibly kill us all even if they wanted to."

"On this matter I believe what Liberation Radio says, not the government in Saigon."

The general skepticism about the lists, except in the sense-

tional pro-government newspapers, underlines the lack of confidence in the Thieu government that has been increasingly expressed during the current Communist offensive.

Desperate attempt

Opposition leaders in Saigon view the circulation of the lists, which probably contain more than 10,000 names, as a desperate attempt by President Thieu to increase his popular support.

Some also view the lists as a veiled threat against them. "The president is saying, 'either support me or you will be killed and the assassination can be easily blamed on the Communists,'" one member of the National Assembly said. "It is an old trick in Vietnam politics."

The most bizarre comment on the whole affair came from a senior, slightly embarrassed government official: "the Americans, the CIA, put us up to it. They've become too Vietnamese," he said. "Of course, the Viet Cong may have planted them (the lists) knowing that we would use them and be discredited."